

PALOUSE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION (PALRTPO)

The three-county region served by the Palouse Regional Transportation Planning Organization is located in the far southeast corner of Washington. The sparsely populated rural counties — Asotin, Columbia and Garfield — are bordered on the north and the east by the Snake River Canyon, and to the south by Oregon. The Blue Mountains stretch across the Oregon-Washington border, limiting road access throughout the southern part of this region. The Umatilla National Forest covers 482 square miles (or 22 percent) of the three-county region.



Harvesting grain in the Palouse region



Port of Wilma — north of Clarkston along the Snake River

Major Transportation Facilities:

The geology of the area dictates much of the transportation system. US 12 and the Snake River are the region's two major transportation facilities. North-south travel is cumbersome. Travelers headed to Northeast Oregon use SR 129. SR 261 and SR 127 connect to northbound highways. SR 128 provides another connection to Idaho from Clarkston and SR 193 connects to the Port of Wilma to the north.

Demographics:

The population of the three-county RTPO was 27,012 in 2000. This represents 0.46 percent of the state population. Each of the counties has a higher population of people 65 years and older than the state average of 11.2 percent: Asotin (16.3 percent) and Columbia (18.5 percent) and Garfield (20.9 percent).

	Population (2000)	Persons Per Square Mile	Median Household Income (1997)
Washington State:	5,894,121	88.6	\$41,715
Asotin County:	20,551	32.4	\$31,753
Columbia County:	4,064	4.7	\$32,009
Garfield County:	2,397	3.4	\$32,363

Freight Movement:

Freight moves in and out of the far southeast corner of Washington State either on a river barge or in a truck on one of the few highways in this region. The economy of each of these counties is closely tied to wheat and other small grain industries. Dayton and Clarkston are the most frequent origins of truck trips.

The Blue Mountain Railroad serves this region. The types of rail freight that travel along rail lines are primarily farm and food products.

PalRTPO Freight Facts:

- Approximately 1/3 of trucks trips originating in this area are headed for Eastern Washington locations. *
- Barges from the Port of Lewiston, near Clarkston in Idaho, travel 465 miles to Astoria, on the Pacific Coast.

**Eastern Washington Intermodal Transportation Survey November 1995*

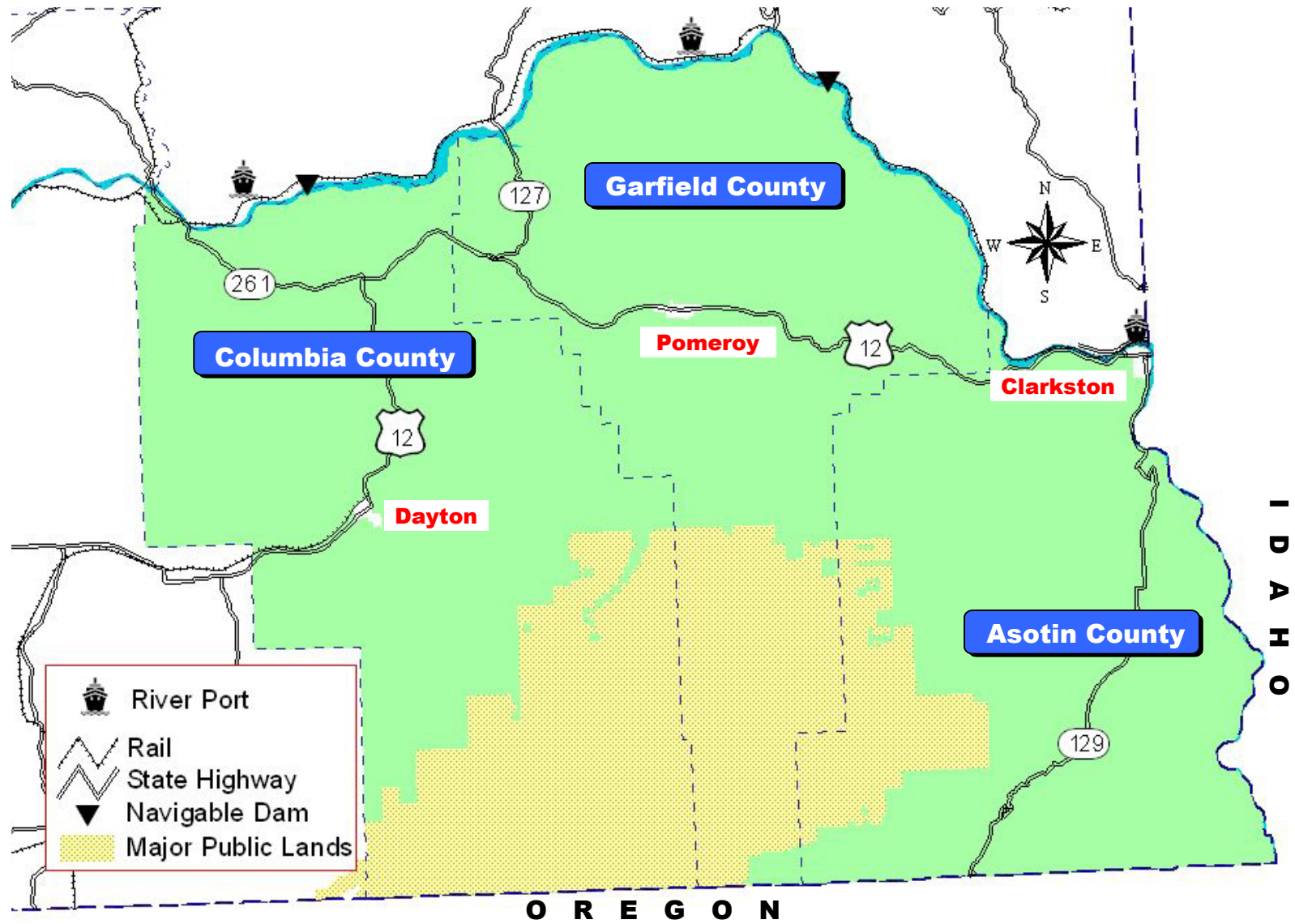


Spacious skies and amber waves of grain in Eastern Washington

Economic Trends:

The economy of the Palouse region is heavily dependent on agriculture. The river and road systems are a vital part of the economy. Population trends show only one of the three counties growing in numbers in the recent years. Local efforts are encouraging freelance professional knowledge-workers to relocate to the beautiful but isolated Palouse. These professionals would rely on electronic links to the “rest of the world,” while enjoying the relaxed life style of rural Southeastern Washington.

Members: Counties: Asotin, Columbia, and Garfield;
Cities: Pomeroy, Clarkston, and Dayton;
Ports: Clarkston, Columbia, and Garfield;
State Agency: WSDOT



Transportation Priorities:

US 12:

US 12 is the only east-west route serving these rural counties. The two-lane roadway has sections of narrow shoulders and lanes less than 12 foot in width. Significant numbers of trucks travel these roadways daily. There are safety concerns at numerous non-channelized county road intersections. At intersections in the urban area of Clarkston, there is a mix of through traffic and local access competing for the roadway.

<i>PalRTPO Needs</i>	
<i>Congestion Management projects:</i>	
<i>State Highways</i>	<i>\$36.7 million</i>

Examples of projects submitted by the RTPO to address this issue include:

- Widening the corridor to 12-foot lanes with a minimum of four-foot shoulders.
- Funding a study to look at the US 12 corridor through Clarkston and the connection with SR 129 — including the SR 129/Fleshman Way/Southway Bridge connection.
- Providing left turn channelization at Cameron Street in Dayton, Tatman Mountain Road, Brown Gulch Road, Clayton Road, and similar county road intersections on US 12.

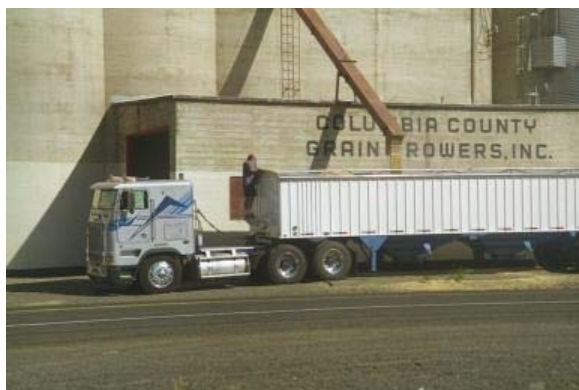
Breaching the Lower Snake River Dams:

The possible breaching of the dams on the Lower Snake River would eliminate the Snake River as a means of moving goods to and from this rural region. The increased cost of transporting goods and commodities in trucks on the roadways would affect consumers as well as the farmers and manufacturers. Many more trucks would be hauling freight on the region's transportation network, increasing congestion and maintenance concerns.



Tugboat on the Snake River

WSDOT and the Palouse RTPO have not identified any specific projects in the event of the dam breaching. Inability to ship goods and commodities on the Snake River system would place great stress on the existing roadway network. Numerous significant roadway improvements would be necessary in the event that the dams were breached.



Loading grain in Columbia County

Farm-to-Market Access:

Some regional roads are subject to heavy truck use and seasonal restrictions due to weight restrictions, compromising the ability to move freight and goods efficiently. All-weather surfacing of highways will improve freight movement in the region. Additionally, barge transportation moves a large amount of goods in and out of this region. Highway access to the ports should be improved.

Examples of projects submitted by the RTPO to provide improvement for Farm to Market roads include:

- Rebuild foundation and surfacing to provide all-weather roadway for Tucannon Road, McKay/Kellogg Road, and similar roads in the region.
- Reconstruct SR 261 roadway from US 12 to Lyon's Ferry to provide all-weather surfacing.
- Construct a new port access road from US 12 in Pomeroy to the Port Industrial Park.

***PaIRTPPO Needs
Freight Movement projects:***
State Highways \$62.2 million



Grande Ronde River in Southeast Asotin County

PaIRTPPO Transportation Facts:

- Between 1970 and 1997 population grew 25%, while registered vehicles increased 61%.
- Between 1990 and 1997 population grew 10%, employment 24% and vehicle miles traveled actually decreased -1%.
- Between 1983 and 1993 there was a 270% increase in tons of commodities (more than 80% grain) shipped through area locks. In 1993 it would take 365,500 truckloads to accomplish the same movement of grain.



**Washington State
Department of Transportation**

